DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 201 204 FL 012 250

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TITLE Cultural Pluralism in Japan: A Sociolinguistic Outline.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 26p.
JOURNAL CIT JALT Journal; v2 p5-29 1980

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cultural Interrelationships; *Cultural Pluralism; Deafness; Diglossia; Language Variation; *Minority Groups; Rural Urban Differences; Second Language Instruction; *Social Dialects; Social Influences; Sociolinguistics; Urban Language
IDENTIFIERS Ainu; Bicognitive Approach; Bidialectalism; Japan; Koreans; Rural Language

ABSTRACT

Addressing the common misconception that Japan is a mono-ethnic, mono-cultural, and monolingual society, this article focuses on several areas of sociolinguistic concern. It discusses: (1) the bimodalism of the Japanese deaf population between Japanese Sign Language as native language and Japanese Spoken Language as acquired second language; (2) the bidialectalism with diglossia situation that encompasses the switch between Japanese dialectal varieties according to social and psychological variables; (3) the explicit and implicit linguistic modes of urban and rural Japanese children, respectively; (4) the Ainu and the Koreans, both ethnic minorities in Japan whose linguistic situations point to the danger imposed by Japan's cultural parochialism; and (5) the need for foreign language education that enhances intercultural communication while fostering inter-group understanding and in-group maintenance. The benefit of a bicognitive approach which supports the coexistence of culturally, ethnically, and linguistically different groups is advanced. (Author/J)

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Cultural Pluralism in Japan: A Sociolinguistic Outline*

Nobuyuki Honna

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Abstract

Japan is generally said to be a mono-ethnic, mono-cultural, and mono-lingual society. But it is not true. In this short paper, I would like to speak for a small number of people in Japan who have started to reconsider the Japanese social structure in terms of linguistic and cultural pluralism. Our observation will be, then, from a worm's-eye-view, rather than from a bird's-eye-view, because a localized down-to-earth point of view is essential when we try to understand human struggles for self-identity. I will choose six sociolinguistic topics from the fields in which I have been working in Japan: 1) bi-

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*Reprinted with minor changes from the *Kinjo Gakuin Daigaku Ronshū* [Collected Papers of the Faculty of Kinjo Gakuin University], No. 78, 1979.

FL 012260

modalism of the deaf between sign language and spoken language, 2) bidialectalism in a multidialectal society, 3) significant differences in the way language is used between urban and rural children, 4-5) Ainu and Korean minorities, and 6) foreign language education.

SIGN LANGUAGE AND SPOKEN LANGUAGE OF THE DEAF

Talking about deaf people and their language and education problems, one can easily allude analogically and allegorically to almost all that is happening in the discussion of linguistic, cultural and cognitive pluralism in the world. Therefore, I think that it is an appropriate topic to start with in the discussion of the whole theme.

There are 250,000 deaf persons in Japan out of a total population of 120 million. This amounts to a deaf-hearing ratio of one to five hundred, which is a slightly high proportion in terms of the fact that every one out of a thousand in the world's population is said to be a deaf person.

A few ethnographical studies available in Japan of the social relationship between deaf and hearing persons indicate very similar domination patterns with those obtained between minority groups and majority groups in any human society. Deaf people are socially ostracized and educationally mishandled.

Specifically, the language of the deaf, their native sign language, is regarded as a simple collection of animal-like gestures, and not as a natural human language. Its syntax is considered to be merely an underdeveloped and rudimentary subsystem of the spoken version of a language.

In deaf education, the use of native sign

language is usually discarded and instead the use of speech is almost categorically imposed upon deaf students. Teaching speech to deaf students (generally called oralism) has been unsuccessful, and this fact has led some sections of the public to wrongly believe that deaf students are not intelligent enough to acquire language.

Deaf students would tell a few years ago a lot of stories about how severely they were punished by their teachers when they were caught signing in class or at school. Students trying to communicate with teachers by sign were ignored at best, and their hands were tied at worst, which was not an unusual practice. Teachers willing to sign for communicative rapprochement with students were reprimanded by principals. Teachers trying to learn how to sign were advised against doing so. Few people were interested, it would appear, in listening to the message deaf persons were trying to bring from their world of silence.

However, current studies of Japanese sign language (see for example Honna, 1978a; Peng and Tonokami, 1978), particularly in the field of sociolinguistics which highlights language use in social contexts, clearly indicate that Japanese sign language, or generally any sign language of the world, is a natural human language as complex and well-organized as any spoken language in terms of phonology (or kineology, more precisely), syntax, semantics, and socio-psychological style-shifting. The only difference of a very significant nature is in articulatory modes--manual for sign language and oral for spoken language.

Sociolinguistic studies (see for example Cicourel and Boeses, 1972) reveal how ignorant most speaker-hearers are of the natural language systems that the deaf communities have developed over the centuries. They have developed by themselves an

effective system of thinking and communication which is quite appropriate to their physical characteristics. Those studies also suggest how ethnocentric hearing persons tend to be about the necessity of speaking and hearing. They consider it "abnormal" not to be able to speak and hear. Actually, however, deaf persons are living a complex life without the use of speech and hearing, but with the use of their natural sign language. Treating the use of sign language as some form of deviance, deficiency, or pathology, therefore, stems from an ignorance of the nature of sign language on the part of the hearing population.

If language is the most important manifestation of the self, as is often argued in the theory of bilingual education, and if sign language is a natural human language, as is suggested in current sociolinguistic surveys, then a deaf person should not be allowed to be deprived of his or her mother language in any way.

Of course, there is no need to dwell upon the fact that speech is the door to a wider society in which a deaf person is encouraged to participate through the acquisition of appropriate forms of spoken language. But oral language acquisition will be more comfortably facilitated if based on sign language than if not, as any second language acquisition is more naturally facilitated if based on the native language than if not. Spoken language acquisition in deaf education should not be the practice of speech pathology, but the exercise of second language teaching.

Because the difference between sign language and spoken language is in modes of communication, I have called a deaf person who acquires Japanese Sign Language as the mother language and who also acquires Japanese Spoken Language as the second language as a "bimodal." Although this "bimodalism"

is far away from the reality in Japan's deaf education, I am optimistic that this will be accepted as a fact of life in due course. Scientific investigations have started coming out in favor of this form of bilingualism.

The crux of the matter is the recognition that it is psychologically most natural that a person should grow in, and then maintain, the native language. If a person is socially required to learn another form of language, the most natural process is not to force that person to abandon the native language for the sake of a politically, socially, or demographically more important or dominant language, but to encourage him or her to develop bimodalism or bilingualism, an ability to switch back and forth between the plural languages and cultures of the society.

Obviously, these arguments apply to the children of various minority groups who speak unofficial dialects or languages. I would now like to turn to the dialectal situation, particularly multidialectalism, which is beginning to gain some popular support in Japan.

BIDIALECTALISM IN A MULTIDIALECTAL SOCIETY

Japan is a small and populous country with only half the space of Texas but ten times more people. The arability of the land is only 18 percent. Yet, because of its long history of social change, there are hundreds of different dialects in Japan. The dialects spoken by a million people in Ryukyu Islands, a chain of islands in Japan's southernmost territory, are almost totally unintelligible to speakers of any dialect of modern Japanese. Actually, Ryukyu dialects are mostly the remnants of Japanese that is believed to have been spoken in the sixth or seventh century.

Because of the geographical distance and the political, social, and cultural isolation of those southernmost isles from the four central islands of Japan, the varieties of Japanese spoken there evolved in a very different direction. Moreover, each island in the Ryukyus has its own dialect, which is in many cases incomprehensible to people living in another island in the area.

Even on the four main islands of Japan, a large number of dialectal varieties exist which are mutually unintelligible. For example, people from the northern part and people from the southern part of Honshu, the main island of Japan, will have tremendous difficulties with mutual communication if they speak their own dialects of Japanese.

Aware of this extraordinarily vast variety of the Japanese language, which is more of a phonological, morphological, and lexical nature than of a syntactic nature, the Japanese government, mass communication media, and educational circles did their best to establish Standard Japanese about a hundred years ago when Japan was unifying and strengthening itself against the threats of advancing Western powers. As a basis for Standard Japanese, authorities selected parts of the Tokyo dialect, which was becoming the most popular and effective source of spoken and written communication throughout the country. Tokyo, then, was becoming the center of modern Japanese culture and civilization from which a new value system was to be transmitted throughout the nation. Authorities generalized the Tokyo usage and spread it across the nation through its centralized mass communication and education networks. These efforts have apparently been totally successful. The majority of the population now can read, write, and comprehend the standard form of Japanese, al-

though there are many who cannot, or do not necessarily speak it.

The primary emphasis on teaching of and in Standard Japanese, however, produced a lot of problems for the whole nation, and particularly for those who live outside of Tokyo and who speak non-standard dialects. Speakers of non-standard dialects were laughed at, humiliated, and despised. Many cases of self-abandonment and some cases of suicide were reported among those young people who came to Tokyo to work or to study.

Quite recently, however, linguistic studies have demonstrated that even Tokyoites speak a non-standard dialect as much as non-Tokyoites. These studies have revealed that the most common way of linguistic life in Japan, actually, is bidialectalism with diglossia, a linguistic practice of switching from a certain form of Standard Japanese to other dialectal varieties in a person's repertory as dictated by the social relation and/or the psychological state of mind in communicative interaction. Influenced by these studies, people have at least intellectually recognized that it is a shame to debase people just because they speak non-Standard Japanese. In education, special care has begun to be taken of pupils who speak non-Standard dialects. Teachers have become very careful and discreet not to hurt their pupils' pride in the process of the teaching of and in Standard Japanese.

At the same time, the criterion of acceptability concerning the varieties of Standard Japanese spoken by its non-native speakers has been moderated. Many different varieties of Standard Japanese have been tolerated and accepted as have many different ways of national life. As people have begun to appreciate linguistic and cultural diversity in a country rich with various regional

traditions, folk bidialectalism will probably receive more popularity and reinforcement as a desirable aspect of national life in Japan. I am not trying to say that this bidialectalism is here to stay everywhere in Japan. But the trend now seems to indicate this favorable direction.

Again, here, the underlying philosophy is that if the situation demands some groups of people to acquire another form of language, it should not be imposed upon them at the cost of depriving them of their native tongues. Rather, societal efforts must be made to create a situation in which second form learning is more naturally facilitated socio-psychologically.

DIFFERENT MODES OF COMMUNICATION OF URBAN AND RURAL CHILDREN

In connection with bidialectalism in Japanese society, I would like to discuss another problem which is more difficult to define and solve. I have elsewhere pointed out that there are significant differences in the way language is used as a means of social communication and intellectual operation between urban children and rural children in Japan (Honna, 1975, 1977). Syntactically and semantically, urban children use language in a more elaborate fashion, while rural children employ words in a more rudimentary manner in expressing their everyday experiences in classroom situations. In other words, urban children are more explicit, while rural children are more implicit in linguistic operation.

This difference is a surprising fact in a sense, since the national goal of education in Japan has been for a hundred years to eliminate regional discrepancies and to attain national

standardization of student achievement. This national educational goal should have been successful in view of the fact that the Education Ministry with its strong centralized power has enforced mandatory national educational policies throughout the country. The Ministry controls almost every aspect of school education. Textbooks and curricula are nationally standardized and must be approved by the Ministry. There is little room left for local substandardization. The only freedom local teachers are allowed to exercise is when they consider how to accomplish the national standard for their students in specific local situations.

How, then, can we account for the regional differences in the children's use of language? I assume that children's acquisition of the mode of language use is determined by patterns of social relation in a community in general and in a family in particular. This process of determination is so strong that any outside force, such as education, will usually not be able to intervene in it without proper programs. As biological beings, normal children are gifted with the universal propensity to develop any type of language and language use, but as social beings, they are generally restricted to the type of language use which prevails in the social structure in which they find themselves.

In an urban community, people are more heterogeneous and less likely to share communalized presuppositions. In a rural community, people are more homogeneous and more apt to share communalized assumptions. If the social relations in two types of communities are different, modes of language use are expected to be different, too. In urban communities where chances are that people do not know each other and that little

is taken for granted, people have to be explicit in communicative interactions. This will result in internalizing more elaborate syntactic and semantic patterns. In rural communities where it is more likely that everybody knows everybody and much is taken for granted, people can be implicit in linguistic expressions. This will culminate in getting accustomed to less elaborate syntactic and semantic structures. I hasten to add that these two different linguistic systems should not be the object of value judgment. They are just the reflections of two different social structures.

The problem is that the mode of language use in school education is based on the more fully developed version of syntax and semantics of the Japanese language, because it is regarded as more appropriate and effective for complex symbolic and conceptual operation. Serious problems arise here. The school language is the mother language for many urban children, which they acquire early in their social settings, while it is almost a foreign language for many rural children who begin to learn it almost for the first time at school. The gap between family language and school language is smaller for urban children than for rural children. For urban children, school life is a constant continuation of their sociolinguistic experience, while for rural children it is a series of new encounters.

Indications are that this gap partly explains why urban children achieve better than rural children at school, and why urban children are able to pass college entrance examinations more frequently than rural children. It is not because urban children are more motivated, more encouraged, and better guided by their parents than rural children. In Japan, education of

children is a national fad throughout the country. In a sense, rural parents may encourage their children to work hard and go to higher institutions more eagerly than urban parents, because they know in their various ways of social life what it means to lack education.

The problem is more sociolinguistic than psychological. The crux of the matter lies in the failure to recognize this sociolinguistic gap on the part of those concerned with school education.

Probably, the division of labor has created unequal distribution of the linguistic means of knowledge. It has differentiated the sociolinguistic systems between the two major segments of the modern industrial society. This is a great epistemological problem in a democratic society, where every member is equally entitled to the linguistic means of acquisition and transmission of a complex system of knowledge.

Unfortunately, we have little knowledge of the nature of the problem. More systematic research is in order to define and explore the problem.[1]

I would now like to turn to the ethnically based discussion of possible linguistic and cultural pluralism in Japan. Although there are several ethnic minorities living in Japanese society, I will have to restrict myself in this short paper to the explanation of the current states of two more visible groups--the Ainu and the Koreans.

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[1]In my earlier papers, I followed the Bernstein (1971, 1973) hypothesis. It will be necessary to examine his theory again in order to obtain a clear picture of the situation. For further comment, see Honna, 1979.

THE AINU: TO MELT OR NOT TO MELT?

The origin of the present-day Ainu is still difficult to determine with evidence.[2] Their language, for example, is unrelated to any other known language of the world.

However, archeological and anthropological data indicate that they were the aboriginal settlers of the northeastern part of the Japanese islands. Their presence there was recorded as early as the seventh century by Japanese court historians. Their highest estimated population was 25,000 in the early nineteenth century.

In the late nineteenth century, partly threatened by Russians who were escalating down south, the deshogunated Japanese government began intensive maneuvers to explore and colonize the northern part of Japan. Due to the loose-jointed nature of their traditional social structure, indigenous to its hunting and fishing economy, the Ainu could not put up successful resistance to the invading Japanese.

Soon, assimilation of the Ainu into the formal structure of Japanese society became a principal object of national policy. In mapping out the policy, the Japanese government sought the assistance of other countries who had had similar experiences with minority groups. Thus, the United States sent consultants to demonstrate their experiences with the American Indians. In the end, the Japanese government rejected the reservation policy, choosing instead the policy of complete detribalization and assimilation under the prin-

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[2]Perhaps the best available anthropological information on the present-day Ainu is Peng and Geiser, 1977. I owe some of the information presented in this paper to their articles.

ciple of civil equality.

What actually happened, however, was the history of their subjugation to a colonial power. Their experience was exactly the same as that of any people who are overwhelmed by a technically advanced and territorially expanding power. In spite of the *de jure* equality as Japanese citizens, most of them are still now suffering from poverty, undereducation, and various forms of social injustice such as job discrimination.

The Japanese assimilation of the Ainu was so quick and powerful that contemporary scholars conclude that there remain very few "pure" Ainu. According to one study, there are possibly 300 persons who might be considered to be pure Ainu if one counted those who claimed Ainu ancestry as far back as the great-grandparent generation.

However, the Ainu Association today claims that there are 70,000 Ainu-related individuals in Japan. This phenomenon can be explained by the relatively high proportion of Ainu families who adopt children of Japanese parentage. The Ainu explain the reason for their practice of adoption as their traditional love of children. Some Japanese officials add that the Ainu's desire to develop strong biological and social linkages with Japanese society has accelerated their traditional adoption practice, an indication of the severe assimilative pressures exerted upon them.

The most important sociological consequence of this intermixing process is that children adopted for rearing by Ainu families are, thereafter, treated as being Ainu by the general community and by themselves. When this child marries a person of Japanese blood, the new family may be considered as Ainu, since one spouse is known as Ainu. This amalgamation trend would explain the Ainu Association's relatively high estimate. But most of them

are only nominally, or sociologically, Ainu.

Currently there are certain groups of people, some Ainu and some Japanese, who wish to re-establish the Ainu world by restoring and maintaining their ethnic language and culture. Politically, their wish will not be materialized, because they demand the return of some portion of Hokkaido, one of the four main islands of Japan that is becoming more and more important economically and territorially nowadays, to their self-government. This is a demand which will unfortunately never be met by virtue of the present human consciousness.

Linguistically and culturally, however, their ethnic assertiveness will possibly be realized if carried out in a politically appropriate way. There is an indication that the Japanese general public is beginning to acknowledge that the Ainu have a right to be Ainu, although within the framework of Japanese society. Their restoration and maintenance programs are now at an incipient stage and we cannot predict where and how far they are going, if anywhere. Although their ethnic efforts will not be innovations from the top, but developments from the grassroots, they will need some degree of endorsement and encouragement from the Japanese government and general public, if they are to be successful. How far Japanese people are willing to accept ethnic and cultural differences in their society will be really tested when their genuine programs are proposed.

As to the restoration of their linguistic practice, tremendous difficulties might present themselves to those who would wish to maintain their ethnic language. Firstly, there are less than ten native speakers of the language left. They are all old people, and their memory is not very clear in all aspects of the language. Sec-

ondly, Ainu has no written form and the data collected and phonetically transcribed by Japanese linguists and anthropologists would not be sufficient for the reconstruction of the dying language. In spite of all these stumbling blocks their language salvation efforts should be encouraged. They are significant not for practical purposes of social communication, but for symbolic manifestations of their whole ethnic maintenance endeavors.

As to the restoration of their cultural heritage, the folkloric literature which was garnered from a Japanese point of view will be reinterpreted from an Ainu point of view. The history of the Ainu and the history of Japanese-Ainu interactions, such as now understood generally in Japan, will also be reconsidered from an Ainu point of view. Consequently, an entirely different picture of the situation will certainly emerge. It will hopefully provide us with a multi-dimensional view of the interesting historical dramas staged on the islands of Japan. This form of multi-cognitivity will be a necessary step toward our eventual comprehensive understanding of human experience.

THE KOREANS: RESIDENTS IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

The most visible ethnic minority in Japan is Korean. There are about 600,000 Koreans, who amount to 90 percent of all the foreigners living in Japan. Today, domestically and internationally, Japanese relations with Koreans are new problems which have hampered the progress of their 2,000-year-old friendship.

The current problems originated in 1910, when Japan with its "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" version of the Manifest Destiny incorporated the Korean Peninsula and deprived the farming population of their lands. Just to survive, many

Koreans of the northern part went to Manchuria, and many of the southern part came to Japan. During the war, furthermore, Japanese militarism brought to Japan as many Koreans as it could find for labor and military services.

During its administration of Korea, Japan attempted to Japanize the Koreans in various ways. Japanese authorities banned the use of Korean and coerced the learning of Japanese, disregarded their version of Buddhism, and imposed Shintoism, stripped them of their traditional costume, and forced the adoption of Japanese names. Japanese officials promised Koreans entirely equal treatment as the children of the Japanese Emperor. But this promise was never kept, and they were almost always treated as second-class citizens.

At the end of the war, there were two million Koreans in Japan. When Korea gained independence, many went home, but a considerable number remained in Japan for various reasons. The political and ideological division of their homeland was the most serious one. Today, 75 percent of 600,000 Koreans living in Japan are Japanese born, and serious identity problems stem from this generational change. Their future depends largely upon the feasibility of unification of their homeland. Their strong wish for unification is evident from the fact that many have applied for permanent residence in Japan but few for naturalization.

There are two major organizations of Koreans in Japan. The one supports and is supported by North Korea and the other South Korea. North-affiliated Koreans explicitly express their desire to return home and devote themselves to the reconstruction of their homeland under the "eternally faultless" guidance of the "great comrade-leader-father," Kim Il Sung. South-related

Koreans fluctuate as to their final destination. There seems to be among them an inclination to assimilate and naturalize in Japan, if they are well accepted. And because their present condition in Japanese society is not comfortable, they have more serious identity problems of whether they should stay Korean or become Japanese.

There are about 150,000 Korean children learning in Japan. Among them, 75.2 percent go to Japanese schools, 23.5 percent to 156 North-affiliated schools, and 1.3 percent to 12 South-related schools (Kim, 1975).

North Korean schools, which are financially supported by the North Korean government, provide ethnic education in Korean, in an attempt to maintain their readiness for the exodus when the situation ripens. South Korean schools, inclined to the policy of making their children adaptable to Japanese society, teach most of the subjects in Japanese and provide special lessons of Korean. Japanese schools teach only in Japanese and offer no bilingual education.

Today, many Koreans are socially functional bilinguals, but they are not happy about their bilingual situation. Here, let me digress briefly and explain my distinction of "happy bilingualism" and "sad bilingualism."

An individual is a happy bilingual if he becomes a bilingual because of his or desire to be so. An individual is a sad bilingual if he or she becomes a bilingual in spite of a desire not to be so.

For a potentially happy bilingual, the motivation to learn the language is integrative rather than instrumental (Lambert, 1972), because the bilingual feels that it enriches his or her personality to learn the language. Upon becoming a bilingual, or while striving to be a bilingual,

the person is happy and proud.

On the other hand, for a residually sad bilingual, the motivation to master the language is instrumental rather than integrative, because survival is the primary reason for the efforts. This person is socially compelled to acquire the foreign tongue because the person's own language is so stigmatized and the culture so denigrated that he or she has no choice but to learn the dominant language in order to make a plain living. Upon becoming a bilingual, or while picking up the language, this person is neither happy nor proud. Self-respect is damaged and integrity is destroyed.

In the process of becoming a bilingual, a person will very likely experience a certain period of insecurity, or "anomie" in Durkheimian sociological terms. For a certain period of time, he or she will be a victim of the disharmony between the norm or the native culture and that of the culture in which the target language is embedded. The person will very likely experience a period in which there is no constant and definite norm on which to base behavior, judgment, and identification. The native culture is left far behind, and yet the second culture, which is aspired to or which is destined to be internalized, is still far away, and the person fluctuates back and forth between the two frames of reference. This experience of no belongingness will be experienced whether a person is becoming a bilingual willingly or unwillingly.

However, given the assumption just outlined, it will not be difficult to see that the magnitude of this anomic mentality is greater for sad bilinguals than for happy bilinguals. If bilingualism is a coercively imposed social condition, the burden a potential bilingual will have to bear will

be much heavier than if it is a socio-psychologically natural development.

Koreans living in Japan are discriminated against in many ways, and they are forced to learn Japanese in order to get along well in Japanese society. Naturally, they are not happy about their bilingualism. They frequently ask themselves soul-searchingly why they have to speak Japanese. Bilingualism is an institutional disgrace to their integrity.

Returning from the digression, let me explain what is being done about this Korean situation in Japan. The Japanese government and its educational agents have done nothing so far to support the language and culture maintenance efforts of Korean people. The Koreans have frequently expressed their interest in ethnic education publicly to Japanese authorities, only to no avail. Korean parents are now so confident that their request for, say, bilingual education for children learning at Japanese schools, will be immediately rejected by Japanese school systems that they never dream of making such a request public. Regrettably, Japanese authorities have not recognized their historical moral obligations to advance the educational opportunities of Korean children in every possible way.

Koreans will have to go a long way before it becomes possible for them to live a sociolinguistically comfortable existence in Japanese society. Currently, however, desirable signs are developing. The traditional Japanese-Korean suspiciousness toward each other is evidently disappearing, although gradually and sporadically, among young generations of both groups. On the Japanese side, generational change is obviously eradicating their demagogically concocted superi-

ority complex toward their closest neighboring people. The Korean language is gaining popularity, although slowly, as an object of intellectual inquiry as well as practical mastery. Influential opinion leaders organized a public pressure group to demand the Japan Broadcasting Corporation, the nation's only public radio and television network, to add Korean to its present foreign language education programs of English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese. All these pro-Korean efforts are the reflection of Japanese people's increased interest in rectifying their century-old misunderstanding of the people who have been physically the nearest but mentally the farthest from them.

For stable bilingualism and biculturalism to take place among minority members, majority individuals do not have to be bilingual and bicultural themselves. But they have to be "bicognitive" enough to allow linguistically, culturally and ethnically different groups of people to exist along with them (see Ramirez and Castañeda, 1974, for a full description of bicognitivism). If there is to be mutation, there has to be adaptation. This state of mind will have to be attained by both mainstreamers and non-mainstreamers. When people of the core culture become bicognitive, they will more likely approve and support the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive diglossia of minority members of the society. They will be less afraid of, and more interested in variety as a fact of life. Xenophobia or superiority complexes will be less likely to occur in this state of mind. Therefore, it is indispensable that Japanese people should achieve drastic attitudinal change and become sensitive and compassionate toward members of minority groups. This objective needs priority attention in Japanese education,

because the social conditions of most of the core-culture Japanese are more inclined to make them ethnocentric rather than linguistically, culturally, and cognitively flexible and adaptable. From this point of view, the existence of Ainu and Korean "problems" here is extremely significant for Japanese people. In an effort to solve these problems, Japanese people will hopefully be able to learn that difference is beautiful because it is what life is all about.

In its formative processes as a cultural entity and as a nation, Japan integrated many aspects of Chinese and Korean traditions into its ethnic character. However, in its subsequent history of long insulation, Japan developed a particularly strong national, cultural, and almost spiritual identity of its own. This self-identity was so monolithic that everything foreign had more chance of rejection than of acceptance at the depth level of psychology. Japan's experience with other cultures was almost always in the form of conquest and seldom in the form of intercultural understanding.

Quite recently, however, partly for intellectual but mostly for economic reasons, an increasing number of people have recognized that cultural parochialism is Japan's No. 1 enemy, and have begun to search for a new philosophy of human coexistence. But ethnocentrism is so deeply rooted in the history of human experience that it is perhaps the most difficult awareness to rectify in the evolution of human nature. I believe that foreign language education is one of the most effective means to realize this socio-psychological evolution. Finally, let me touch on some of the problems of Japan's foreign language education defined as a means of enhancing intercultural communication and understanding.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

A glance at the history of European language teaching in Japan might be revealing in this respect. When Japan knew that Western powers were advancing to its territory a hundred and some years ago, it chose to modernize itself through learning their advanced technology and industry. Japanese leaders encouraged the nation's young elite to learn European languages, but it was only for the purpose of acquiring scientific information, and not for the purpose of starting intercultural communication. There were several reasons for this priority, and I will state only one of them briefly.

Japanese leaders thought that Western cultural forces with powerful technological gimmicks were dismantling the national integrity of India and China, and took exceedingly cautious measures not to repeat this pattern in Japan. They pursued the policy of strengthening the nation's history-nurtured cultural and spiritual identity as a symbol of unity to defend its independent sovereignty from probable Western intervention. Japan opened its front door to usher in Western civilization, but kept its back door shut to keep out Western culture. When self-defense was a primary preoccupation, intercultural understanding was a luxury which they could not afford.

Many people are still persistently suspicious about foreign language learning as a means and a process of intercultural understanding. They are afraid that their children's sense of national identity will be diluted, weakened, or destroyed by their exposure to influential foreign culture. Therefore, Japan is now confronted with great difficulties introducing intercultural aspects into its foreign language education programs.

In constructing and implementing intercultural understanding programs in foreign language education, special care must be taken to enhance the affective and respectful understanding of all forms of language and culture, not only of one target language and culture. In teaching English, for example, we would not like to see students of English developing superior attitudes toward students of, say, Korean or Swahili, and their native speakers. Instead, we would like to see students of English, through their learning just one language, develop all-embracing attitudes toward every other language and culture. This goal in foreign language education makes it enormously difficult to devise appropriate programs in Japan.

Current studies of bilingualism, biculturalism, and bicognitivism in the United States are showing that if pursued in the socio-psychologically natural way, this mental pluralism will stimulate more enlightened and objective conceptual perspectives for the understanding of the human environment.[3] These findings will offer great theoretical and practical suggestions to Japanese specialists who are working on intercultural foreign language programs. The fact that little progress has yet been made does not question the feasibility of the proposal. It only demonstrates the necessity of more concerted efforts.

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[3]What is being done now in bilingual education in the United States will be of particular interest; however, there are some problems in this field. As far as I can see, most of the programs are directed toward *intra*-group solidification of a certain ethnic population, but not toward *inter*-group unification of the ethnically plural American society. Bilingual education in America could not

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be achieved effectively and meaningfully without the mutual understanding and support of both majority and minority members of the society. And within-group oriented bilingual education would not only decrease the opportunities for majority support, but also increase the chances for majority resistance. There seems to be evidence of a possible schism already, which might eventually put into question the justice and wisdom of bilingual education itself. If one knows the history of minorities in American society, one will understand the reasons for current priority on in-group ethnic maintenance efforts. But still I believe that if it incorporates an essential extent of inter-group understanding programs, bilingual/bicultural/bicognitive education will more successfully facilitate majority cooperation. Then bilingual education in America will stand a better chance of promoting a higher desirable degree of intercultural understanding in an ethnically diverse society (see also Honna, 1978b, c).

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